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W. Arthur's Reply to Matthews,  
1852

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*W. A. M.*  
HAS THE CONFERENCE BROKEN COVENANT?

A PROTEST AND A DISPROOF,

ADDRESSED TO

RICHARD MATTHEWS, ESQ.,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW,

IN REFERENCE TO HIS

LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE:

CONTAINING A REPRINT OF THE DOCUMENT ON WHICH  
MR. MATTHEWS FOUNDS HIS CHARGE.

BY WILLIAM ARTHUR, A.M.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR:

SOLD BY JOHN MASON, 66, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1852.

*Price Two Pence.*

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LONDON :

PRINTED BY JAMES NICHOLS,  
HOXTON-SQUARE.

Wes. 1452

## HAS THE CONFERENCE BROKEN COVENANT?

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MY DEAR SIR,

ON receiving a copy of your printed Letter to the President of the Conference, (for which, I presume, I was indebted to yourself,) I read it with the attention we always give to the sentiments of those for whom we entertain an unaffected regard. The means you took to bring it under the notice of influential laymen, showed that you attached much importance to the document. Your character assured, to the cause you undertook, the advantage of ability and temper. Your profession led one to expect that you would throw important light on the point discussed; but, whether you have done so or not, is just the question which I now crave your permission to raise.

The object of your Letter is to prove, that our present administration of discipline, in reference to the exclusion of Members, is founded on a breach of a compact into which the Conference of 1797 entered with the people. To make good your case, you attempt to establish two facts; First, That, in the year just named, a Rule was made in these words: "*Neither can any Member of the Society be excluded but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting;*" which words you assume to mean that, after the guilt of an accused member has been affirmed by verdict of the Leaders'-Meeting, the majority of that Meeting shall determine the sentence which the Minister is to pronounce: Secondly, That this Rule has been withdrawn from our public documents, and one in these words substituted in its place: "*No person must be expelled from the Society for any breach of our Rules, or even for manifest immorality, till such fact or crime has been proved at a Leaders'-Meeting;*" which Rule clearly binds the Minister, as to all who have not been convicted, but leaves him responsible as to the sentence to be passed on one whose peers have found him guilty.

### THE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE CONFERENCE.

You approach your startling charge against a public body with the care of one who feels its gravity; and you couch it in the measured language of a gentleman, but you express it with

the distinctness of one who means to affix, on those against whom it is directed, all the guilt it implies. Referring to the document wherein you suppose the fraud to be discoverable, you say :—

The document then goes on, divided into heads by Roman numerals. No. "II. Of the Expulsion of Members from the Society." The Rule on this subject, as given in the Rules published in 1798, and again in 1800, was, I suppose, thought not "material;" for, instead of reprinting that, (to the Societies, the most material of all Rules,) it is silently dropped, and that which I have shown never to have been a Rule at all, is given, from the information-paper of 1797, as the Rule by which the Societies were to be governed.

Hitherto I have avoided all imputations. They are very uncongenial to my mind; and I would endeavour to account for this departure from the true Rule, if I could, but I cannot; and am compelled to believe that it was not done with that carefulness of purpose which ought scrupulously to have marked the conduct of those, whoever they were, to whom was committed the integrity of so important a public document. The Societies were at peace. No one cared to look jealously after the integrity of a new edition of the Rules. Nothing was easier than to drop that which was originally conceded with reluctance; and the object was accomplished.

Tremendous accusation! I need not tell *you* how deep is the dishonour it involves; but I may remind you of the numbers whom it implicates. It implicates, first, the individuals "to whom was committed the integrity of so important a public document," and who, believing that they saw a prospect of impunity, "accomplished" the crime. It implicates the collective Conference of the day, who authorized the falsification of a code which they had signed with language which you properly quote :—

Whereas we, the undersigned, have on this and the preceding day carefully revised the Rules drawn up and left us by our venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our Large Minutes, to which we consented when we were admitted, and by which we were regulated during his life. And whereas we have collected together those Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection, we do now, VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH, sign our names as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid collection of Rules, or code of laws, God being our helper.

It implicates every individual member of that Conference who had subscribed the covenant words just quoted; as none of them resented the crime, or proclaimed it. For instance, Richard Reece, who has scarcely ceased to be one of us, and whose name stands to that covenant, spent, if the charge be true, some fifty years here, with the unrepented guilt of abetting public deceit, and breaking public covenant. It implicates the Confer-

ence ever since, which, always containing men who must have known of such a transaction, had it ever occurred, has never repudiated it. It implicates, though much less directly, every one of us who now unworthily bear the name of Methodist Preacher, and who uphold the state of things which, on your showing, is founded on this deception.

If the charge be true, the "old Preachers" were guilty of a great crime, and we who succeed to their name and responsibilities are partakers of their sin; but, my dear Sir, if it be not true, you have been led to cherish and to circulate a suspicion, less blamable only than the offence it imagines.

#### GROUND OF THE ACCUSATION.

WHAT, then, are the grounds whereupon you rest the proof of our dishonour? You refer to the agitations which existed in our Connexion for some years previous to 1797; and to the measures taken by the Conference of that year, with a view to allay them. You show that, while yet sitting, it issued an Address to the Societies, explaining those measures; and that this Address contains the following statements:—

V. We have selected all our ancient Rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential Rules, or prudential at the present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them,—one single Preacher excepted, who in consequence withdrew from us.

VI. We have determined, that all the Rules which relate to the Societies, Leaders, Stewards, Local Preachers, Trustees, and Quarterly-Meetings, shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.

The first of these, as also the passage quoted on the preceding page, show us that a document had been prepared and signed: the second leads us to expect a published document; and this expectation is confirmed by the concluding words of the Address which you give.

We have represented these measures, which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. In the Regulations which will be published with the Rules of the Society, as mentioned above, you will have the whole at large.

We are your affectionate brethren,  
Signed on behalf, and by order, of the Conference,  
THOMAS COKE, *President*.  
SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary*.



Hence you draw the following conclusions, all perfectly legitimate:—

1. That a document had been prepared with the approbation of the whole Conference, (excepting the three persons who withdrew,) which the Conference trusted would be satisfactory to the Societies.

2. That the Conference were desirous to take the earliest opportunity to communicate the *substance* of the document to the Societies, without waiting for the printing of the document itself.

3. That the above seven heads did not contain the *document itself*, but only “the sense of the whole.”

To these you might have added another inference; namely, that when the document announced did appear, it would be a full collection, and an authoritative code of Methodist laws; in a word, the Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and people in the Methodist Societies; and, indeed, though you do not formally announce this conclusion, you reason upon it as granted.

Another inference you not only might, but by even a superficial analysis of your premises must, have drawn; namely, that the forthcoming Form of Discipline would contain, first, a revised edition of the Rules *drawn up and left us by our late venerable father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our Large Minutes*; secondly, other and later “*Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism,*” as, for instance, the Rules framed at Mr. Wesley’s death for forming and regulating Districts, the Plan of Pacification, &c.; and, thirdly, “*others to which we have no objection*;” namely, the concessions then determined upon.

Having then, reached the certainty that such a code was promised, you very naturally ask, “Where is this collection ‘of Rules or code of laws?’” and also,

To suppose that a document so carefully prepared, so hopefully signed, and so earnestly promised to the Societies, “for the benefit and convenience of all the members,” was, after all, never published,—would be to admit an amount of improbability, and of faithlessness on the part of the Conference of that day, which is absolutely incredible. The plain fact is, *they were published,—honestly, faithfully,*—and in a manner which puts all cavils as to their genuineness to silence.

Every word of this I cordially support.

#### THE IMAGINARY CODE AND THE REAL.

BUT just here your mistakes begin. Having unaccountably lived in the belief that the code published by the Conference



was lost sight of; and having imagined that it was your happiness to find it, you bring the discovery to light with an emphasis. "I give," you say, "the title-page, as its own voucher;" and thus you give it:—

THE  
NATURE,  
DESIGN,  
AND  
GENERAL RULES,  
OF THE  
METHODIST SOCIETIES,  
ESTABLISHED  
BY THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.  
  
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
THE RULES  
OF THE  
BAND SOCIETIES.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEORGE WHITFIELD, CITY ROAD; AND SOLD  
AT THE METHODIST PREACHING HOUSES IN TOWN  
AND COUNTRY. 1798.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

"This," you then cry, "is the document, published by order of the Conference." No, indeed, my dear Sir, it is not the document; it is as unlike the document published by order of the Conference, as a well-meant penny pamphlet, giving a slight *resumé* of the "Nature, Design, and General Rules of the Methodist Societies," well could be. "Then where, I again ask," you repeat, "is the genuine document, if this be not it?" Where? Here in my left hand; there in the records of the Chancery-Court of England; yonder up and down the country, in the houses of different Methodists, more than one of whom I could name. This is the document, and I give the title-page as its own voucher:—

MINUTES  
OF  
SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS,  
BETWEEN  
THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, A.M.,  
AND  
THE PREACHERS IN CONNEXION WITH HIM.  
CONTAINING  
THE FORM OF DISCIPLINE  
ESTABLISHED  
AMONG THE PREACHERS AND PEOPLE  
IN THE  
METHODIST SOCIETIES.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEORGE WHITFIELD, CITY-ROAD;  
AND SOLD AT ALL THE METHODIST PREACHING-HOUSES IN TOWN  
AND COUNTRY.

1779.

Here, then, are two documents; which is the one promised? That the public may judge, they shall have a full view of the pamphlet which you advance as the collection of Rules or code of laws issued after the great constitutional settlement of '97; and having already given the title, I now give every other syllable in the document, with the single exception of the "Rules of the Band Societies," which all may see in Wesley's Works and other publications.

RULES OF THE SOCIETY.

1. IN the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That they might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together; which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily,) he gave those advices, from time to time, which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded the meeting with prayer, suited to their several necessities.

2. This was the rise of the Methodist Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a Society is no other than "a company of persons, who, having the form, are seeking the power, of godliness; united, in order to pray together, to

receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." \*

There is only one condition previously required of those who request to be admitted into this Society: namely, *a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.*† But, wherever this is fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.‡

That it may the more easily be discerned whether the members of the Society are working out their salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies, called "Classes," according to their respective places of abode, or as it may suit their convenience. There are about twelve persons, or more, in each class; one of whom is styled the "Leader."

No person is admitted upon trial till he has met three or four times in a class, and is recommended by a Leader, or by a proper person, and receives a note from a Travelling Preacher, and the Rules of the Society. Having met two months on trial, and being recommended by the Leader, he then receives a ticket, and is considered as a member of the Society.

Persons are received into Society, in large towns, on the Sunday following the Quarterly Visitation of the classes: the officiating Preacher then reads over their names in the Society-meeting.

A Leader ought to be a person of *clear experience and sound judgment, truly devoted to God, zealous for the salvation of souls, of upright conversation, and one who has gifts proper for the work.* He is nominated by the Superintendent at a Leaders'-Meeting; and, if approved of by a majority of the Leaders present, is confirmed in that office.

It is the business of a Leader to see all the persons belonging to his class *once* a week, at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper; not only how they keep the Rules of the Society, but how they grow in the knowledge and love of God; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give for the support of the Gospel; to meet the Preacher and Stewards of the Society once a week, in order to inform the Preacher of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd; to pay to the Stewards what they have received of their several classes, and to show their account of what each person has contributed.

A Steward of the Society ought to be *an experienced Christian, of upright conversation, and one who can write and keep fair accounts.* He is chosen to his office at a Quarterly or at a Leaders' Meeting. He is then nominated by the Superintendent, and, if approved of by a majority of the persons present, confirmed in his office for *one year*; and at the end of the year is either re-elected, or another person chosen into his place. But no Leader, or Steward, can be put out of his place but by a majority of Leaders, or a Quarterly-Meeting. Neither can any member of the Society be excluded but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting.

All the members of the Society must continue to evidence their desire of salvation; by doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practised,—such as, the taking of the name of God in vain; the profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling, by employing a barber, by making or going to any feast or wake, or by

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\* "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. vi. 2; Heb. x. 20; Acts ii. 24.)

† Matt. i. 21.

‡ Matt. iii. 8.

learning the military exercise as a volunteer, or by attending to see them exercise, on the Lord's day.

They must avoid drunkenness; buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme difficulty. Fighting, quarrelling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing.\* The using many words in buying and selling; the buying or selling uncustomed goods. The giving or taking things on usury, that is, unlawful interest.† Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; all foolish talking and jesting.‡ Evil speaking, particularly of Magistrates and Ministers, seeing that in the oracles of God we are commanded to be subject to the higher powers; and that *honour the King* is there connected with the *fear of God*.§

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us. Doing what we know is not for the glory of God; as the putting on of gold, or costly apparel; the following the vain and foolish customs or fashions of the world.||

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; such as *dancing, cards, plays, balls, or horse-races*; none of which can be reconciled to the advice of the Apostle.¶

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge and love of God.\*\*

Softness and needless self-indulgence; laying up treasures upon earth; borrowing money without a probability of paying it again; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.††

It is expected of all who continue in the Society, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, by doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity; doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all men; to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping those that are sick or in prison.‡‡

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting, all we have any intercourse with.§§

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or earnestly desiring so to be; employing them preferably to others.||| Buying one of another, helping each other in business; and so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.¶¶ By all possible diligence, frugality, and cleanliness, that the Gospel be not blamed.\*\*\*

By running with patience the race that is set before them: denying themselves,

\* 1 Peter iii. 9.

† Psalm xv. 5.

‡ Eph. iv. 29.

§ 1 Peter ii. 17.

|| "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Rom. xii. 2; 1 Cor. x. 31.)

¶ "Redeem the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. v. 16.)

\*\* Eph. v. 19; James v. 13.

†† "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again." (Psalm xxxvii. 21.)

‡‡ "To do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 16; Matt. xxv. 35, &c.)

§§ "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." (Lev. xix. 17.)

||| Especially barbers who do not follow their business on the Lord's day.]

¶¶ Rom. x. 12; Heb. xiii. 1.

\*\*\* 2 Cor. vi. 3; 1 Cor. x. 23.

and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ; to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men will say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake.\*

It is expected of all who desire to continue in the Society that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, by attending all the ordinances of God;† particularly the ministry of the word, where it is preached or expounded in its primitive purity, at all opportunities; carefully, with earnest prayer to God for a blessing upon what they hear.‡

The supper of the Lord whenever it is administered, with solemn prayer, and deliberate self-devotion.§

Family prayer morning and evening, at the least.||

Private prayer, also, morning and evening, and oftener if opportunity serve.¶

Searching the Scriptures: by reading some part of them every day, carefully, seriously, and with earnest prayer for a blessing from God; and doing this fruitfully, immediately practising what they learn.\*\*

Fasting or abstinence, especially on the four Quarterly Fasts; namely, the first Friday after New Year's-day, after Lady-day, after Midsummer-day, and after Michaelmas-day.††

No member of the Society shall marry with an unbeliever, or a person who does not fear God, and walk in his ways.‡‡ Neither should they take any step towards marriage but in the fear of God, with earnest prayer for direction, and with the advice and approbation of their Christian friends.§§

To prevent impostors from defrauding our brethren, and likewise to introduce the real members into all the privileges and fellowship to which they have a just claim, when obliged to remove into other parts, they are enjoined to receive a note of recommendation from a Travelling Preacher before their removal.

The Superintendent, or some Travelling Preacher, shall, if possible, meet the Local Preachers once a quarter; and no one can be admitted as a Local Preacher unless he is proposed and approved of by a majority of that Meeting. If this cannot be done in any particular Circuit, then they must be proposed and approved of at the Quarterly-Meeting.

Every Local Preacher must meet in class, and conform to all our discipline; and none can be excused in this respect.

\* "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. v. 11; Heb. xi. 2.)

† Psalm xxiv. 4.

‡ "Blessed are they that hear the word of the Lord, and keep it." (Luke xi. 28.)

§ Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 26.

|| "Pour out Thy fury upon the Heathen that have not known Thee, and upon the families that call not on Thy name." (Jer. x. 25; Psalm lxxix. 9.)

¶ "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret will reward thee openly." (Matt. vi. 6.)

\*\* "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think that ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John v. 39; Col. iii. 6.)

†† Matt. vi. 16.

‡‡ "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

§§ "In all thy ways acknowledge Him; and He will direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 6; Heb. xiii. 4.)

In order to preserve the life and power of godliness among us, the members of the Society are desired carefully to guard against formality in public worship. In singing the praises of God, all the congregation are requested to join, (the women are desired to sing their part,) to take care not to sing too slow, to use no vain repetitions, and to sing no anthems. The hearers are entreated seriously and solemnly to join with the Preacher in prayer, and to hear the word with the deepest attention; taking care not to talk in the chapel when the service is over; but to go quietly and silently away, so that they may profit by what they have heard.

In order to preserve our Rules, all the members of the Society should constantly show their tickets to the Steward, or to those persons who may be appointed for that purpose, at the meeting of the Society.

No person can continue a member of the Society who becomes a bankrupt, unless it appears, upon examination, that he has acted upright, kept good accounts, and has not been concerned in the base practice of raising money by coining notes, commonly called the *bill-trade*.

No person, who is a Trustee, shall be excluded from the Society until his crime or breach of the Rules be proved, in the presence of the rest of the Trustees and Leaders.

No person among us shall call another heretic, bigot, or any other disrespectful name, on any account, for a difference in sentiment.

No schoolmaster, or mistress, shall teach dancing, or receive a dancing-master into their school; nor should the members of our Society suffer their children to be taught to dance.

These are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us: we have delivered our own souls.

This, then, is what you proclaim to be "*the document* which was publicly assented to by the Conference." Let us consider its claims:—

1. ITS TITLE, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the Methodist Societies." This is not what the Conference subscribed: that was the Large Minutes, with the whole Code of Rules in force. But this assumes to be no more than the *General Rules*.

2. ITS SIZE. In speaking of the reasons why the Conference, during its session, issued only the Address, and promised that the full document should follow, you remind us that then they only gave the general heads of their measures, "in as concise a manner as possible," and that in the forthcoming code they were to give "the whole at large;" and as this implied a much larger document, you justly say, "for the document itself they were to wait till it could be conveniently printed." Now, exa-



mine the pamphlet of '98 : it is twelve pages duodecimo, of these the "Band Rules" take two and a half, the title one, and one is blank : and "The Nature, Design, and General Rules" occupy seven and a half, of which about one is foot notes. Then turn to the Form of Discipline : it also is printed in duodecimo ; and in it the Address occupies just seven pages and a half without foot notes ; so that "the whole at large" is, according to you, contained in about a page less of letter-press than the "heads," in "as concise a manner as possible."

3. ITS ARRANGEMENT. Does it classify subjects like a code ? Not at all. At the commencement stand the words, "Rules of the Society," and from that to the point where come "Rules of the Band Societies," not one "head" of any sort is given. It begins with the words of Mr. Wesley's own Rules, and immediately departs from them, returns again, and closes with them, inserting here and there, with great neglect of order, counsels, comments, and now and then the *letter* of a Rule. This is very unlike documents issued by the Conference ; they, although chargeable with faults both of arrangement and expression, ever attempted, at least, clear arrangement. Take, for instance, the Address of '97, which you assert "was only intended to serve as a piece of preliminary information" to the code of which your pamphlet is the embodiment ; that "preliminary" document proceeds, as you truly say, "classifying the various subjects it treats of, under seven heads, marked with Roman numerals, and subdivided by Italian figures." But the code of which it was but the hasty precursor classifies nothing, subdivides nothing, expends not one Roman numeral on all its contents, and only affords two Italic figures on the first page, and these inherited from the orderly John Wesley ; but having once broken through his line, it returns no more to figures or landmarks. Just take the passage on which you found the charge, and compare it with the "preliminary" Address.

*Pamphlet of '97, giving only "the SENSE of the whole."*      *Pamphlet of '98, said to give "the WHOLE at large."*

III. In respect to the receiving and excluding private members of Society.

1. The Leaders'-Meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the Society : and after such declaration, the Superintendent shall not admit such person into the Society.

A Steward of the Society ought to be *an experienced Christian, of upright conversation, and one who can write and keep fair accounts.* He is chosen to his office at a Quarterly or at a Leaders' Meeting. He is there nominated by the Superintendent, and, if approved of by a majority of persons present, con-



*Pamphlet of '97, giving only "the SENSE of the whole."*

2. No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a Leaders'-Meeting.

IV. In respect to the appointment and removal of Leaders, Stewards, and Local Preachers, and concerning Meetings :—

1. No person shall be appointed a Leader or Steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the Leaders'-Meeting : the nomination to be in the Superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the Leaders'-Meeting.

2. The former Rule, concerning Local Preachers, is confirmed ; namely, That no person shall receive a Plan as a Local Preacher without the approbation of a Local-Preachers' Meeting.

*Pamphlet of '98, said to give "the WHOLE at large."*

firmed in his office for *one year*. And at the end of the year, is either re-elected or another person chosen in his place. But no Leader or Steward can be put out of his place but by a majority of Leaders or a Quarterly-Meeting. Neither can any member of the Society be excluded but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting.

The pamphlet of '98 *describes* what a Steward ought to be, and *describes* the mode of his appointment, re-election, and removal, *not giving the text of the law in any of these cases* ; and then proceeds, regardless of arrangement, to *describe the operation* of the law on the expulsion of members. On comparing the order of the *Address* with the confusion of the *General Rules*, surely it is plain, that if the former was the herald of any code, it was not of such a code as that.

4. ITS CONTENTS. Where does it contain one word expressive of enactment? "It is determined,"\* "It was agreed," or any other formula of Conference enactment, never once occurs. It all through proceeds not as a collection of texts of law, but, as its title indicates, a description of the Nature, Design, &c., of the Societies. The passage which is to destroy our honest name, does not pretend to give the text of any law ; but *describes the effect of two or three laws*, on two different subjects. But the form of laws is of little importance ; if the *General Rules* contained the laws themselves, we might easily dispense with the form ; but how, my dear Sir, did you, who believed that the promised Code was published "honestly and faithfully," overlook the fact that the little paper, in your hand, contained—

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\* A form of expression in the Regulations of '97, which you never quote.

Not one word of the Plan of Pacification ;

Not one word of the new and important laws of '97 on "Finance and money matters," the first step toward that system which has brought the laity to perform a due part in the administration of our Funds.

Not one word of the laws of the same year on "all other temporal matters ;"

Not one word of the most important popular concession of that year, after the one respecting the trial of members, namely, the right of each Quarterly-Meeting to suspend any new law for a year in its own Circuit ;

Not one word respecting the institution, design, and jurisdiction of District-Meetings ;

Not one word (except incidentally) about any of the Connexional Funds or Institutions ;

Not one word about how to secure chapels to the Connexion ;

Not one word about "the method of trying candidates for the ministry," about "the duty of a Methodist Preacher," or "the peculiar business of a Superintendent ;"

And, finally, not one word about "the method of holding a Conference."

Really, my dear Sir, I am astonished to find myself proving to any human being that this artless tract is not *the collection* of the Laws of Methodism.

#### THE REAL CODE.

TAKE, now, the other document, and examine,—

1. ITS TITLE. Here you have first, "Minutes of several Conversations, between the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., and the Preachers in connexion with him ;" answering to the first part of the solemn declaration, which speaks of Rules drawn up by Mr. Wesley, "and *published by him in our Large Minutes*;" and, secondly, containing the "*Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and People*," &c. ; answering to the closing part of the declaration, "We do now VOLUNTARILY and in GOOD FAITH sign our names as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid collection of Rules, or code of Laws, God being our helper." And, as if this document were to be placed beyond the possibility of being confounded with any other, a singular misprint occurs on the title-page, by which it must ever continue distinguished ; the year, instead of 1797, is printed, by transposition of the last two cyphers, 1779, while in the body of the document

1797 is always correctly printed. This title, then, tells us that the document comes out in the name of the Conference, is the Form of Discipline, and appeared in the year of the settlement, 1797.

2. ITS SIZE. It is not, like the *General Rules*, less than its own "preliminary piece of information;" but extends over eighty pages, of which that preliminary paper occupies seven and a half.

3. ITS ARRANGEMENT. Like a code it distributes its contents under separate heads, no less in number than thirty-five, each with its carefully-marked subdivisions.

4. ITS CONTENTS. Of these you will best judge by the following table; and if you compare it with the indications given in the Minutes of '97 of what the forthcoming document would contain, you will find it as exactly fulfils every expectation raised, as the pamphlet of '98 glaringly fails so to do.

Section.	Page.
I. THE Design of God in sending the Methodist Preachers.....	1
II. Rise of Methodism .....	1
III. Method of trying Candidates for the Ministry .....	2
IV. Office and Duty of a Methodist Preacher.....	5
V. The peculiar Business of a Superintendent .....	7
VI. Method of admitting Persons into Society .....	12
VII. Admission of Local Preachers, and their Duty .....	13
VIII. Method of holding a Conference .....	14
IX. Business of a Helper .....	15
X. Directions for obtaining higher Degrees of Holiness .....	16
XI. For obtaining a closer Union among the Preachers.....	17
XII. On preaching where we can form no Society; and on Field- Preaching .....	18
XIII. On the Decrease of the Work, and the proper Means of promoting a Revival .....	19
XIV. Against Antinomianism .....	21
XV. The most useful Way of preaching .....	23
XVI. How to guard against Formality in Public Worship, especially in Singing .....	25
XVII. On visiting and instructing the People from House to House .....	26
XVIII. On instructing the Children .....	33
XIX. On Conformity to the World, Bribery, and Sabbath-Breaking .....	34
XX. On marrying with Unbelievers .....	36
XXI. On Bankruptcies, Strangers staying at the Society Meetings, Love Feasts, Funeral Sermons, and Talking in the Chapels .....	36
XXII. On Strangers being entertained at the Preachers' Houses; and on Cleanliness .....	37
XXIII. In what Cases we allow Service in Church-Hours .....	38
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Section.	Page.
XXVI. Plan of General Pacification .....	44
XXVII. Agreement with the Trustees at Bristol, in 1794.....	50
XXVIII. Mr. Wesley's Letter to the Conference in 1791; and their Determination in consequence of it .....	53
XXIX. Certain Rules agreed to by the Conference at different Times .....	54
XXX. The Rules of the Preachers' Fund .....	60
XXXI. Account of Kingswood School .....	64
XXXII. Of the Yearly Collection .....	67
XXXIII. How to preserve the Chapels .....	69
XXXIV. Regulations made at Leeds Conference in 1797 .....	72
XXXV. Sundry Advices to the Preachers .....	79

5. ITS AUTHORITY. The copy now before me bears on the blank leaf after the title an entry of which this is a fac-simile.\*

*Wm. Atherton*

*While you consent to, and walk  
by these Rules, we shall rejoice  
to receive you as a fellow labourer  
Signed in behalf of the Conference  
H. Moore, President*

*J. Coke, Secretary  
London*

*Aug<sup>r</sup>. 16. 1804*

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\* This copy is now the property of the Rev. H. H. Chettle.

I need not say that this is proof that Mr. Atherton, on being taken into full connexion, received this book as the code whereby he was to walk. Here we have the evidence that, in the year 1804, seven years after the Conference had signed the code whereto it bound itself, and issued the address announcing it, it made a *promise* of fidelity to that same Code the condition on which it would admit to its Body a new member, and actual *conformity* to it the condition on which it would continue to recognise him. This use of the book answers, at once, every doubt as to its being the Code, and every imputation upon the good faith of the Conference in maintaining all it had promised.

It is manifest that, if the Conference honestly meant to adhere to the code of '97, it must make it binding on all its new members; that each of them might feel, as those who had signed it felt, that it was to regulate his performance of all ecclesiastical acts. Had, then, the pamphlet of '98 been the code, it would certainly have been given to each Preacher received into full connexion by the Conference, with the injunction to "walk by" it. Did it ever attain to such a solemn use? But suppose it had, and that the young Minister had looked into it for directions on the question then much agitated, "*In what cases we allow service in church hours;*" or as to how he should act when a new law was opposed at a Quarterly-Meeting, or on a score other points of essential importance to the rights of the people; why, he would have found that his Collection of Rules left him free to follow his uncontrolled pleasure. Had the Conference promulged the code which you strangely advocate, omitting most of the great Connexional laws whereby the privileges of the people were guaranteed, then would they have well merited that a gentleman as worthy and honourable as yourself should foul their memory with measured charges of forgery and covenant-breaking; and then would you have launched with all the terribleness of justice, the accusation which now you send out with all the weakness of mistake.

#### TWO METHODS OF DISCOVERING A CODE.

THE manner in which you reached the conclusion, that the pamphlet of *General Rules* was the code promised in '97, is worthy of your own most serious review.

On sitting down to investigate this subject, my first object was to ascertain the genuineness of the printed Minutes, or rather of the published extracts from the Minutes of the Conference of 1797. The 8vo. edition, printed in 1812, was the

only edition I possessed; and I felt desirous to obtain a sight of the original edition, printed in 1797. My reason for this was, that the wording given in the 8vo. edition (vol. i., p. 375) appeared to be susceptible of more than one meaning,—indefinite, as the word, “immorality,”—and inconsistent with the words, “clandestine expulsions,” used in p. 377, inasmuch as the question was not whether there should be “clandestine,” that is, *secret*, “expulsions;” but whether there should be any expulsion at all, except in a definite and prescribed manner. I was thus led to think, that what is there put down could not be intended for, as it did not bear the characteristics of, a formal and definite law.

In searching after the original edition, I fell upon an edition of the Minutes from the commencement, in 1744 to the year 1800, inclusive; printed at Leeds, by Baines, in 1803. This gave the same reading as the 8vo. edition; and as it was only six years after the original of 1797, I presumed that he must have had the original to print from; and that the reading was most likely correct. Shortly afterward extended inquiries brought me two copies of the original, printed in 1797; and that I might be perfectly certain of their identity, I began to compare them, sentence by sentence, with the 8vo. edition. I found them verbally and faithfully correct.

You examined whether there had been any tampering with our authorised documents, and found there had been none. Then you took up a document offering no pretence of authority, beyond being published at the Book-Room, and seeing that it contained words not found in any act of Conference, or in a single document of '97, you overlooked the most staring evidences that it is no code, and, above all, not the full code subscribed and promised, and proclaimed it to be so, without citing from its contents one iota to justify that announcement, except that it gives words differing from an original which you confess to be genuine.

On looking for the tests you had applied to the pamphlet, to discover whether or not it met the conditions required in the code promised in '97, and seeing that you did not inform us of your having applied any test at all, I was strongly reminded of the course pursued, in a similar inquiry for the code, by a mutual friend of yours and mine. More than twenty years ago, Dr. Beecham\* concluded, from the Minutes of '97, as you concluded, that a code was promised. For this he inquired; his attention was directed to the collection of Rules in the Class-Books; but, naturally testing it to see whether it bore the marks implied by the Minutes of '97, he saw it did not; for, instead of containing all the Rules, it avowedly contained only the “most material,” and omitted, for instance, the important popular concession respecting new laws. He then naturally

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\* See “Essay on the Constitution of Methodism,” third edition, p. 61, *et seq.*



turned to his own copy of the Large Minutes (printed 1812); but, applying the same rule, found even it defective; for it did not contain the "miscellaneous regulations" of '97 respecting Districts, nor those of previous years on the same subject. Therefore, he concluded that this was not "such a code of Laws as that which the Conference of '97 digested and subscribed." But some one named to him a book, containing a collection of Rules, and printed, said he, in 1779. The title of this was peculiar; it announced itself as the Large Minutes, "containing the Form of Discipline established among the Preachers and people of the Methodist Societies;" and a glance showed that the '79 was meant for '97: the same test as was applied to the others was applied to this, and brought out evidence that this document contained all which the code promised in '97 should be expected to contain. Had any one offered Dr. Beecham the pamphlet of '98, how many seconds would he have looked at it, having in view the conditions which must be fulfilled, before he would have said of it, as of a much more likely document, (Large Minutes of 1812,) that it had "no pretensions to the character of such a code of Laws, as that which the Conference of '97 digested and subscribed?"

#### HOW THE CODE WAS TESTED IN 1835.

CAREFUL and sound of judgment as Dr. Beecham is, he might have erred; but his decision has had a distinguished confirmation. In 1835 it became necessary to argue, before the Vice-Chancellor, and then before the Lord Chancellor, of England, the question as to what was the code of Methodist Law. The Form of Discipline was, of course, put in;\* but Dr. Warren's Counsel argued on behalf, not certainly of your code, but of the Large Minutes. The Vice-Chancellor, however, decided that the Form of Discipline was the code; and when it came before the Lord Chancellor, he used the following words:—

In the year 1797 it was considered by the Conference, who are the legislative body, that it was of importance to the Connexion, and for the purpose of promoting harmony, and for the purpose of pointing out the line of duty which individuals should pursue, that it was of importance to publish the existing Rules of the Society. In the preamble to this it says, "And whereas we have collected together those Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism, as well as others to which we have no objection,—we do now, voluntarily, and in

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\* Under the designation, "Exhibit F."



good faith, sign our names, as approving of, and engaging to comply with, the aforesaid Collection of Rules, or Code of Laws, God being our Helper." Now that Code has been given in evidence. It is the document described by the letter "F,"—the "Exhibit F."

Again, referring to the Large Minutes, he says:—

But I consider this as nothing more than as a guide to the conduct of the Preacher. It is not intended as a perfect Code of Laws; for this obvious reason,—*that the Regulations as to the District-Committee are entirely excluded from it*, not merely for the purpose of trial, but *for all other purposes*. It is quite obvious, on the face of that document itself, *it was not intended as a transcript of the Code of Laws*, as then existing, but as a mere guide and assistant to the Preacher."

Thus, while you demand, "Where is the Code? Where is the document?" you are answered, in solemn judgment, from the highest tribunal which gentlemen of your profession approach, "That code has been given in evidence. It is the document described by the letter 'F,'—the 'Exhibit F.'"

While the Form of Discipline passed through a test, in 1835, and came out with triumph, your Code, also, was heard of in that year; for you, though by far the most considerable of its advocates, are by no means the first. A gentleman, who took a lead in the troubles of that day, produced this pamphlet, declared it to be the "authorized and original version of the laws," and, with some regard for logic, attempted to account for it by an anecdote, implying that *the Conference of '98 had amended the legislation of '97*, and that this pamphlet was the fruit. This wanted some shadow of evidence from the records of '98; but, failing that, the anecdote was told referring to the venerable James Wood, then alive, and, from his age and virtues, called the Father of the Conference. That aged Minister was not slow to speak. He said, "On the Law of the Conference, in 1797, respecting the expulsion of members, I do affirm I never had but one opinion; namely, that the *fact* was with the Leaders'-Meeting, but the *sentence* with the Superintendent." How many suspicions, rumours, and speeches of agitators would outweigh the evidence of that one patriarch, did he stand alone? \* Mr. Wood also expressed his belief that the pamphlet in question was prepared

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\* It is easy to quote expressions of men who warmly opposed the concessions, which would seem to imply not only that the Conference had conceded what you contend for, but all authority whatever that it had to concede; while Kilham and his friends proved, in their way, that it had conceded next to nothing. The testimony of Wood, Isaac, Entwisle, and of men still living who were then living, is perfectly conclusive.

by a private individual, "without any order from the Conference." \*

But it was sold at the Book-Room, and thence you infer that it was prepared by order of Conference. Some admirer of the excellent Companion to the Wesleyan Hymn-Book might just as well argue, fifty years hence, that it was the musical code of the Connexion, put forth by Conference authority. The pamphlet, though incomplete and loose, contained no evil; and the words you make a prize of, would not then perplex any one, as the precise letter of the new law, whose effect they ambiguously, but not erroneously, described, was familiar to all. Yet even had this pamphlet been compiled under authority, it could never be meant as an accurate code. But, a summary at best, its language, when doubtful, must be interpreted by reference to the original. Freely as you have handled the reputation of the Conference, you have not ventured to accuse it of suppressing all those solemn enactments of which no mention is here made.

#### WHEN THE FRAUD WAS COMMITTED, AND BY WHOM.

You have, however, found a document, bearing date 1808, which adopts the title of your pamphlet, and subjoins, "To which are added, Sundry Particular Regulations, made in some late Conferences of the Preachers." Thus it claims not only to give "General Rules," but "Particular Regulations" of recent origin; it classifies its contents, it has all the form, not of a loose gathering like the pamphlet of '98, but of a digested manual; it prefixes a Minute of '97, (quoted above under No. VI. of the Address,) and declares itself to be in fulfilment of it; yet, with all this, it does not profess to be a code, but to give the "most material" Rules. Under the head of "Expulsion of Members," (a subject to which your pamphlet does not devote even a separate paragraph,) it reprints the words of the Conference of '97, as published, first, in the separate Address; secondly, in the Minutes for the year; and, thirdly, in the Form of Discipline, under the head of, "Certain Regulations made at Leeds, in 1797." Yet, because it gives these words three times published by the Conference of 1797,—and not the words found in the pamphlet of '98, but not to be found in a single document of '97, or any where in the shape of an enactment,—you think it fitting to hold this language:

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\* This case is treated at large in the Methodist Magazine for 1835, p. 917, *et seq.*

Instead of reprinting that, (to the Societies, the most material of all Rules,) it is silently dropped, and that which I have shown never to have been a Rule at all is given from the information paper of 1797, as the Rule by which the Societies were to be governed.

Then, according to you, the point at which the crime was "accomplished," was in the preparation of this manual of Rules for the use of the people generally. Yet, with the self-exposing frankness which stamps your whole Letter, you show that you do not know the history of this manual. I may, then, say that this edition of 1808 was a reprint of one published in 1804: so that the deed, if done at all, was done in that year. And the man who did it was one who was that year appointed Editor, who deemed himself called upon by the Minutes of '97, which he quotes, to prepare a selection of Rules for the Societies and officers, which would not only embrace the old general laws, but especially the new and important enactments of late years. That man was JOSEPH BENSON; if any hand forged and falsified it, it was his hand; if your charges soil any name, it is his name; and if the souls of the happy were capable of being troubled by injuries committed upon their memory here, the spirit first disturbed by these accusations would be that of Joseph Benson. Let the hundreds of his spiritual children who yet live among us say, which must perish,—your suspicions, or his good name?

You say, "nothing was easier" than to do the criminal deed. But here it is necessary to point out that you quite misapprehend the extent of fraud which, on your own showing, was committed. You speak here as if it consisted in dropping two lines of the pamphlet of '98, and substituting something else; but, if a crime were committed at all, it was a far huger crime than that. For, according to you, this whole pamphlet was sacred; it was "the document so carefully prepared, so hopefully signed, and so earnestly promised to the Societies," "published *honestly, faithfully*." Now, does Mr. Benson's selection of Rules consist of a reprint of this document, omitting only the words, "Neither can any member of the Society be excluded, but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting?" Quite the contrary; one trace of that document is never found in his selection; and you, while blaming him because, "instead of reprinting" the above two lines of it, he had omitted them, should have blamed him for passing by utterly, and treating as a thing of nought, the solemn covenant document. The question between you and him is not a question as to "*the integrity* of so important a public document," but as to the total suppression

of it; for his document is a new one, altogether and avowedly different from yours in size, in title, in arrangement, and in contents. He evidently never thought of following that pamphlet, but drew his Rules from the original documents; and for this he and we are to be made infamous! "Nothing easier," than thus to set totally aside the solemn instrument signed in '97, and put in its place a new one, differing in form and terms. To believe this easy, you must believe that inside the Conference was not one man capable of virtue; that outside was not one capable of suspicion. "Nothing easier" than to burke, in the name of a public body, a document signed by them all, and sent out to the world! "Nothing easier" than, with the New Connexion only seven years old, to forge and falsify our published laws and solemn covenants! No; the proper inference of an honourable man, from the fact that Joseph Benson took no account of the pamphlet of '98, (even if that fact stood alone,) is, that it was of no authority; and not that he was destitute of worth. Durst any man have suppressed a code signed by the Conference without having first obtained its leave? And durst any man have risen to ask authority to "accomplish" such a crime?

#### MEANING OF THE WORDS IN THE PAMPHLET OF '98.

You quote this paragraph:—

A Steward of the Society ought to be *an experienced Christian, of upright conversation, and one who can write and keep fair accounts*. He is chosen to his office at a Quarterly or at a Leaders' Meeting. He is there nominated by the Superintendent, and, if approved of by a majority of persons present, confirmed in his office for *one year*; and, at the end of the year, is either re-elected, or another person chosen in his place. But no Leader or Steward can be put out of his place but by a majority of Leaders or a Quarterly-Meeting. Neither can any member of the Society be excluded but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting.

And then, re-quoting the last sentence, you ask, "Can words be plainer or less ambiguous?" Yes; words can be much less ambiguous. For instance, take the Rule as it stands in its proper place in the Form of Discipline:—

As to the exclusion of members from the Society, the far greater number exclude themselves, by utterly forsaking us; but, with respect to others, let the Rules of the Society be carefully attended to, and the Leaders be consulted on such occasions, and the crime proved to their satisfaction.

This is clear as day; and now place beside it the summary of the Rule, as given in the Address, and then the description of its effect, as in your pamphlet:—

No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a Leaders'-Meeting.

Neither can any member of the Society be excluded but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting.

Is not the first a clear Rule, the second an honest summary, the third a fair description of its effect? Did such a Rule as you desire exist on our statute-book, this phrase would certainly be quite capable of harmonising with it; but it is also a very natural phrase for any one to use in describing the effect of the Rule which places the protection of a majority of Leaders between the member and the arbitrary exercise of authority. The celebrated twenty-ninth chapter of Magna Charta, which places the protection of a jury between the person or property of the subject and the power of the King, thus expresses that protection: "No free man shall be taken or imprisoned, or be disseized of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or any otherwise destroyed, nor we will not pass upon him, nor condemn him but by lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land."\* This is not a mere provision as to *fine*; but as to all manner of punishment in property and person, including outlawry, banishment (or transportation), and every other form of *destruction*. Will you, therefore, turn upon the Judges, and accuse them of foul play, because, when a man is convicted by verdict of his peers, they do not put the sentence to the vote of the jury? Here is the comment of Blackstone on the point:—

IN MAGNA CHARTA it is more than once insisted upon, as the bulwark of our liberties, that no free man shall be hurt, in either his PERSON or his PROPERTY, but by the legal judgment of his equals, or the law of the land.

"Can words be plainer or less ambiguous?"

Even the pamphlet of '98 gives internal evidences of the sense which its compiler attached to *his own* words,—words you fail to find the Conference ever using. He says, "No person who is a Trustee shall be excluded from the Society until his crime or breach of the Rules be proved in the presence of the rest of the Trustees and Leaders." If that pamphlet be our code, this is the law for the trial of Trustees; and if your interpretation of the words respecting members be correct, that code leaves Trustees less under the protection of the majority than members. But the fact that the compiler of the pamphlet gave this

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\* Translation in "English Liberties," published in 1682. The original of the words in point is, *Nisi per legale iudicium parium suorum, vel per legem terræ.*



Rule of '94 respecting Trustees, shows that he had no idea that the act of '97 had placed them on a new footing, as it would have done on your showing; whereas, according to the code, it left them as before, but extended to members the provision first made for Trustees.

You say, "There is certainly a discrepancy between this Rule and the words contained in the paper of information. This is not for me to explain." That is treating an obstacle to your conclusion very lightly. The discrepancy to which you confess does not lie between the pamphlet of '98 and any single Conference document, but between it and, first, the Address wherein the Conference announced to the Societies the "measures they had taken;" secondly, the Minutes of their proceedings, issued immediately after they rose; thirdly, the Form of Discipline, published the same year, in fulfilment of their promise; fourthly, the first *Selection* of Rules, professing to be published on their behalf; fifthly, the Rule respecting Trustees in the pamphlet itself; and, finally, every authoritative document, of every date, which professes to contain a statement of the new Regulations passed in '97.

Now, how is this discrepancy to be disposed of? Are we to put your meaning on the words, which differ from all authorized texts, and then to declare the originals of no authority? or are we to interpret the phrase by the Rule on which it is founded? How should we do in case of the Rules of 1804, which profess to be in fulfilment of the design of the Conference of 1797? They say, "*At a Leaders'-Meeting.*" This is ambiguous. One says it does not mean "to the satisfaction of the Leaders'-Meeting;" but, on appealing to the text of '97, you find it reads, "to their satisfaction." Are you, then, to denounce the original, and exalt the subsequent selection? Did any Superintendent attempt so to do, how justly would he be reminded that, whenever the language of an abridged code is doubtful, appeal must be made to the text of the law in full. Were it certain that the words quoted could only have one meaning, they would still be of little account as standing in such a pamphlet against all the formal documents; but even that one point is very far from being certain. Did any one ask you, "Can a Judge, in England, transport a man without the verdict of a jury?" you would answer, "No." Did any one ask, "Can a Superintendent, in Methodism, expel a man without the verdict of a Leaders'-Meeting?" you would answer, "No." Is not this sufficient to account for the use of the

language in question, even by far more exact writers than the compiler of '98?

SUMMARY OF PROOFS THAT THE CONFERENCE OF '97 NEVER MADE ANY RULE ON THE EXPULSION OF MEMBERS BUT THAT WHICH IS ACKNOWLEDGED AS OUR LAW AT THIS DAY.

1. THE Conference of '97 drew up and solemnly signed a Collection of the Rules, which it bound itself to keep; and, "as to the exclusion of members," the words of that document are,—

The far greater number exclude themselves, by utterly forsaking us; but, with respect to others, let the Rules of the Society be carefully attended to, and the Leaders be consulted on such occasions, and the crime proved to their satisfaction.

2. It issued an Address, printed on a broadsheet, and sent through the post, informing the Societies of what it had done; wherein it thus *sums up* its new law:—

No person shall be expelled from the Society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a Leaders'-Meeting.

3. In that Address it thus comments on the new law:—

The members of our Societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as *that* Superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole Meeting of Leaders. Such a Superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and, if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

Showing that the change now made did not lie in binding the Superintendent to measure the sentence by the will of the majority, but in depriving him of the power to expel without a verdict.

4. It reprinted both this summary of the Rule and this comment in its Minutes.

5. It published the Rule, as above, in its Form of Discipline, and there again reprinted both the summary and the comment, removing from the Address the suspicion of being only ephemeral, by heading it, "Certain Regulations made at Leeds, in 1797,"—a heading which destroys your notion that the Address was not meant to have authority.

6. From the Minutes of Mr. Kilham's party, dated Leeds, August, 1797, it appears that they demanded of the Conference, to legislate, as to the expulsion of improper persons from the Society, in these terms: "The Preacher shall, if the majority (of the Leaders'-Meeting) judge them unworthy of a place in the Society, exclude them, by crossing their names out of the class-paper." And if, after the notorious result, it still needs to be said that the Conference did not meet their wishes, that is



sufficiently done in part of the said Minutes, where, in "Remarks on a Letter (the Address) published by the Conference to the different Societies, dated August 7th, 1797," they admit that concessions have been made on these five points: (1.) Financial matters; (2.) The appointment of Leaders and Stewards; (3.) The privileges of Local Preachers; (4.) Special Meetings; (5.) Making new laws; but pass over, in silence, the subject of the demand quoted above: sufficient proof that they felt, that all that had been done on that head, was to extend to *members* what had in '94 been enacted as to *Trustees*, and in '95 applied to *all officers*, in these terms of the Plan of Pacification: "Evidence shall be examined on both sides, and if the charge be proved, the Superintendent Preacher shall expel from the Society the person so offending;" and that, while unable to say that nothing had been done, they did not wish to acknowledge a concession which denied the great point they demanded.\*

7. The Conference rendered the Code containing the new Rule, as published in '97, binding on all Preachers whom it received into full connexion.

8. When the Editor, in 1804, published a *selection* of Rules, he referred to the Minutes of '97, thus inviting comparison with the Rule there given.

9. The Code of '97 was republished in 1835, and is made binding on every Preacher taken into full connexion at this day; and the selection of Rules, giving the sense of the documents of '97, are in all the class-books at this day.

You can lay your hand on no document of '97, and on no formal code, or even *formal* abridgment, of any year, containing the words you have hastily called "Rule," and on none which does not contain the words you hastily fling away. You set out to prove that it was "*formally* agreed at and by the Conference of *ninety seven*, that *no member of the Society can be expelled but by a majority at a Leaders'-Meeting*;" and the only jot of evidence you find is, that, in the year *ninety eight*, a *resumé* of Rules appeared, wherein those words are most *informally* stuck at the end of a paragraph about Stewards.

#### TWO SMALL POINTS TO BE NOTED.

"How long the Rule published in 1798 and 1800 continued to be generally acted upon, I cannot tell." The usage for which

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\* In their Minutes they quote the new Rule thus, "proved *by* a Leaders'-Meeting;" an evident misprint.

you contend never was *generally* acted upon: it certainly grew up in some places, just as in others grew up, from a misconception of the law on admitting members, the habit of discussing at the Leaders'-Meeting the character of every person upon trial; a practice of which the great bulk of the Connexion never heard any more than of the other. This conduct of some Superintendents proves nothing more than the conduct of other Superintendents, who took the indefensible ground that the Leaders were to vote only on the bare *fact*, without judging whether or not the fact constituted a *crime*; or of those who contended that "*at a Leaders'-Meeting*," meant only "*at*," and not "*to the satisfaction of*;" or the yet more blameable conduct of others, who sometimes acted with little reference to the law at all.

"In Ireland, I am credibly informed, it (the usage) has universally obtained to the present time." So far from being introduced into Ireland by any law of '97, it was adopted there in 1812, upon the Memorial of a Meeting of Officers at Portadown, the request of which Memorial, now under my eye, is sufficient proof that the usage was not already established. And, while you believe that its adoption here would have prevented divisions, you should remember that, in Ireland, some five years after its adoption, a division occurred which carried away one-third of the Societies; while, unlike English Methodism after its divisions, Irish Methodism has never recovered its numerical strength. In 1812 its members counted 27,823; and now, forty years after adopting the change you deem so fruitful in benefits, they count, I mourn to say, only 20,915,—nearly seven thousand less.

Your case against the Conference breaks down; and surely your concern for the honour of religion will lead you to rejoice that it does, in spite of personal considerations. And, as my pen shall not be the one to insinuate that you wrote with a knowledge which would altogether alter the character of your error, I most readily discern the cause and the excuse of the hardihood with which you rush into that error, in the very limited knowledge of the case which your transparent Letter discloses.

You did not know that the Form of Discipline had been published in 1797.

You did not know that the Conference required all its new members, on admission, to pledge themselves to it.

You did not know that it had been recognised in the Court of Chancery as our code.

You did not know that the first formal selection of Rules, published after the Form of Discipline, appeared in 1804, and was prepared by Mr. Benson.\*

It is as clear as an unbroken succession of records can make it, that the Rule on the expulsion of members, which the Conference of 1797 prepared and signed, was honestly stated to the people at the moment, by the Address, has been honestly retained in our documents to this day, and is now in full force as our Connexional law. If you have any complaint against the Conference at all, it amounts to this, that they permitted a summary of Rules to be sold for years at the Book-Room which was loose in every respect, and which has proved to contain one expression capable of being quoted as showing a discrepancy with all our standard documents. Whatever blame is due to that negligence, apply it; but farther condemnation there is none. And, indeed, the want of art, and even of exactness, which characterises many of the documents of that day, bears upon the face of it proof that if posterity was to suffer by the documents of these good men, it would be through their negligence, and not through their finesse.

That, after a member of the church was convicted of offences, the Minister was to administer or to omit ecclesiastical discipline at the dictation of the majority, is a principle which the Methodist Conference has never adopted; but, on the contrary, the Conference of 1797, on which that principle was urged, perspicuously guards, in every one of its documents, the freedom of the Minister in dealing with proved transgressors; and the discontented of that year felt that this freedom was held inviolate. But in maintaining

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\* It would be easy to argue that clause No. VI. of the Address (quoted page 5) does not refer to the Code actually signed by the Conference; but orders a selection of Rules from that Code, for the use of officers and members. In that case it would follow, that any document appearing in obedience to such order, was one not then prepared, never signed by Conference, and of authority only where it gave unaltered the Rules from the Code. This would at once close the case, by proving that the pamphlet of '98, or Mr. Benson's Selection of 1804, must, on all doubtful points, be corrected by the Code. But I have preferred the more tedious method of taking up the question as it was laid down, namely, Whether or not the document in question was the one solemnly signed by the Conference. The note prefixed by Mr. Benson to his *Selection* shows he did not regard any former one as answering to the intention of the Minute of '97; so that he did not concede to the pamphlet of '98 even the rank of an abridged Code.

this, that Conference did give to the people a just and powerful check against its abuse, by providing that no Minister should have power to exclude a member, until the Leaders, on a hearing of the evidence, had solemnly pronounced his crime proved;—a provision which I shall ever uphold in the most generous interpretation it can fairly receive. The Leaders are judges of the fact and of the guilt, the Minister is responsible for the sentence:—this was the constitutional balance established in '97; and this is the constitutional balance maintained at this day. No fraud has been played, no Rule falsified, no public document spirited away, no powers laid down and “resumed;” what our fathers made the law in '97, we have it now; and in presence of our confiding people, in presence of our accusers, either the violent or the composed, in presence of the world that rejoices in such charges against Ministers of religion, we confidently answer for the men who went before us, and for ourselves, *You have laid to our charge things that we knew not.* And with the facts now before the world, I do solemnly protest, that he who accuses our fathers of tampering with the text of Rules, or us of abetting that crime, is guilty of false accusation against the holy dead and the honest living; and every man who, by his name or his words, has accredited that accusation, owes it to everlasting justice to disclaim it.

It does not, however, follow that, because the Rule as it now stands is the identical Rule of '97, it is, therefore, right. I have not been arguing the merits of the law: but only proving that we Methodist Preachers (with faults and errors enough to call for the deepest humiliation, and to forbid a murmur under the “complicated wrong” which an all-wise Providence permits to be done us) are yet not sons, heirs, and abettors of criminals. I have been making good a plea of *Not guilty*; and, by the mercy of God, that plea is good. But as to whether Christian Ministers ought or ought not to place themselves under the direction of the majority, and to administer their Master's law on *proved transgressors*, according to the command of the majority, that is quite another question, to be settled on other grounds. You honestly believe they ought, I honestly believe they ought not; but I shall not enter upon it here, though, perhaps, before long I may take it up.

Not long ago, a Tractarian Clergyman wrote a letter, without a name, in a Tractarian newspaper, charging the Conference with having tampered with Wesley's Journals. Mr. Thomas Jackson, with the heart of a Methodist Preacher, repelled the

charge, declaring that he had edited those works, and that not a word had been falsified. "Had I done so," cried Mr. Jackson, "how could I have faced the Methodist Conference?" The Clergyman at once wrote to the same paper, confessing that he had been misled, and acknowledging the justice of Mr. Jackson's indignation.

This letter without a name, in a paper seen by few Methodists, was a slight injury to our reputation and usefulness, compared with a letter bearing a name identified with an honourable life, pushed upon the notice of the influential laymen of the body, in a day when all were uniting to seek peace and pursue it; and laying at our door not only the single charge of falsifying documents, but also the second and fouler one of breaking public pledges. Unless I mistake your character, you will be glad that *your* pen has not *fixed*, upon the name of Methodist Preacher, a stigma which, if true, would have been eternal; and you, the living accuser of one who is gone hence, will surely not be slower to respond to the appeal of Joseph Benson, whom, from his invisible abode, we may well hear crying, "How could I have faced my God?" than was the invisible accuser just mentioned, to respond to the voice of a living man asserting his own integrity. Surely you will not have your name quoted in abatement of the credit of hundreds of good men, in hinderance of the usefulness of hundreds of Christian Ministers; but will clear the memory of our fathers, and leave us who unworthily fill their places, conscious that we are as far below their real goodness as we are above their imagined crime, to follow our labours without this thought at our heart, that if, when we are gone, some heated partisan should invent against us a defamatory tale, the intelligent and the worthy of our people, instead of chasing the dishonour from their own minds and our memory, will take it up and cast it in the face of our children and our children's children.

In pleading the cause of aggrieved innocence, coldness would be a fault; but if in the warmth that is just, one word has escaped me which seems to express any thing contrary to the respect due to a gentleman and a Christian, that word does injustice to my sense of your claims.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

WILLIAM ARTHUR.

